

# CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE

## Plays and Players

Although Frank Bacon has been on the stage for thirty-odd years, acting is his fourth profession. Perhaps "occupation" would be a more exact word, considering that Mr. Bacon began his career as the village photographer.

Back in Mountain View, the small California town where Frank Bacon was born, there still stands the building, in which are two rooms, where Mr. Bacon was wont to pose bashful newlyweds and later their protesting offspring. But, along about the time the actor had to shave every day, cameras and darkrooms began to bore him and he looked about for something more interesting to which to devote the talents he felt lurked within his youthful bosom.

Like many others, Mr. Bacon had always nursed the delusion that life on a newspaper was just one thrill after another. Wherefore he went to San José, the nearest city, and pined on the steps of "The Mercury" until some one let him try his hand at being a reporter. Delighted, Mr. Bacon sat down and waited for the murders to begin. But somehow the city editor, having a practical cast of mind, seemed to want the newcomer to devote himself to weddings, funerals and eulogies. So this, too, palled, and Mr. Bacon turned to politics for consolation and excitement. In his spare evenings he acted with an amateur theatrical organization, putting his heart into it more and more as he became disillusioned with politics. And in the course of events, no one electing him to any of the offices for which he ran, Frank Bacon threw "respectability" to the winds and went trouping.

For several years he travelled in stock companies, lingered in repertory organizations, and even took his own aggregation to Portland, where he remained for two years. His experience with character rôles then brought him an offer from the famous old stock company at the Alcazar Theatre, San Francisco. He accepted, and remained there for seventeen years, playing a different part every week. The earthquake brought the actor East, and now he is the chief attraction in "Lightnin'" at the Gaiety Theatre, as well as co-author with Winchell Smith of the play.

When Julie Opp Faversham and Leo Shubert present the gigantic patriotic historical play of "Freedom" Marjorie Van Dresser will return to the speaking stage after an absence of several years. Though she made her debut as an actress, Miss Van Dresser abandoned the theatre for grand opera, in which she has risen to high distinction here and abroad.

Her first important rôle as an actress was as the adventures in "The Great Ruby," in which she followed Blanche Bates in Augustin Daly's company at Daly's Theatre in New York. She played Ada Rehan's part in the same play when this actress went to London. Then came a season as leading mezzo-soprano with the Bostonians, after which she appeared as leading woman with Viola Allen in Marion Crawford's "In the Palace of the King." Her last appearance on the speaking stage was as co-star with Otis Skinner when she played Francesca da Rimini.

The actress then went abroad to study for opera. Her debut on the operatic stage was made at one of the leading Continental opera houses as Elizabeth in "Tannhäuser." Returning to America at the outbreak of the war she became leading soprano with the Chicago Grand Opera Company for two seasons. Though Miss Van Dresser has not yet appeared in opera in New York City, she has been heard here in concert.

Jane Cowl wants a company all her own. And those who know her say she'll get it.

In truth, she has made an excellent start in that direction already. In the company supporting her in "Information, Please!" are Orme Caldera, Henry Stephenson, Cecil Owen, Hetty Graham, Helen Salinger and one or two others, all of whom have now been appearing in plays with her for the better part of four years.

Miss Cowl's idea, however, is not to form a repertory company, if the truth be known. She has little taste for repertory. On the contrary, with the exception of "Lilac Time," which she played two seasons, and not even taking into account "Within the Law," Miss Cowl has not played for more than one season in the same play. A play a year has been her motto, and she has been pretty consistent in living up to it.

What she does want, though, is a company each acquainted with the other, each familiar with the other's peculiarities which can bring out the best that is in a play.

Acting, after all, is interpreting. Miss Cowl argues. It is as susceptible of teamwork as is any other line of effort. Individually, other actors may be quite as good—better, perhaps, in similar rôles—yet if her theory is correct Miss Cowl believes that men and women who have had years of experience together will do better collectively than would an aggregation of stars.

And so, gradually, she is building up a company of her own. Each year sees more and more familiar faces in the supporting cast. Another season or two and it will be possible—in fact, probable—that there will be advertised the appearance of Jane Cowl in a Jane Cowl play acted by Jane Cowl players. And, just to make it complete, perhaps it will be presented in a Jane Cowl theatre.

William Collier, the comedian and the star of "Nothing but Lies," says that the methods of obtaining laughter in the stage have greatly changed in the last twenty-five years, and that the

change has been for the better, because it has been an intellectual one.

"You have only to compare a successful farce or comedy of to-day with successes of twenty years ago to see the great change," says Mr. Collier. "That change has come about because the people have progressed and don't care for slapstick methods that used to be in vogue. To create laughter on the stage twenty-five years ago it was necessary to accentuate your personal appearance to the point of grotesqueness or use a slapstick. That sort of thing designated the comedian, and audiences expected the man who was dressed in outlandish costume to supply the laughs, even if he had to do it at the cost of his personal feelings."

"Now it is the funny line or the funny situation that creates the laughter. The latter day comedy or farce is on a much higher plane than the ones of former days. Stage business is on a higher plane, too. I mean by stage business the little touches—personal touches of the player and stage director—that go to make a play human that authors may sometimes visualize but seldom know enough to put in their script."

"And mentioning authors reminds me that the author is the only individual connected with the production of the play who never loses. No matter how much or how little business the play does, the author gets his royalty, and continues to receive his percentage of the receipts until his play ceases to be worth while exploiting. Actors may rehearse for weeks without pay, and then find themselves in a play that is a failure. I like the business of being an actor, but the person who has the surest thing in the theatrical game is the author. He never loses."

Miss Imogene, who played a small bit and a large thinking part in "She Walked in Her Sleep," severed her connection with that company at the conclusion of the performance at the Playhouse last night. She quit by mutual consent.

The cause of her elimination from the cast of the farce was "galloping growth," a garden variety of elephantiasis.

When Imogene first joined the company she weighed a pound and a half and stood one and one-half hands high in her bare feet. Last night, just before she left the theatre after removing her make-up, she tipped the scales at sixteen pounds and stood five hands high in her bare feet.

Not only did Imogene get "too big" for her part; she became obsessed with the theatrical malady known as artistic temperament and insisted on playing all her scenes up stage, centre, anticipating cues and interpolating facial expression not in the script.

Her dogship left the cast with regret. Her understudy, Miss Imagination, a French poodle, is now the regular incumbent of the part, and will make her professional debut for the first time on any stage at the Playhouse to-morrow.

In contrast with the player of a single line of characters, the "type impersonator," so much in evidence in America in both musical plays and comedies, Margaret Linden, who comes into the cast supporting Mizzi in "Head Over Heels" at the George M. Cohan Theatre, is an example of the wide range of the parts that fall to the lot of both the English and Australian actor.

An Australian born, Miss Linden has been a prominent figure in a variety of parts that would probably seem incompatible to the average modern actor on this side of the seas. Under the Williamson regime in Australia she sang the rôle of Dion in "The Quaker Girl" and the leading character in "The Arcadians" and was a member of the company headed by Fred Niblo and Josephine Cohan. In "The Fortune Hunter" she enacted the part of Josephine. And yet in her brief career she has also played the pathetic central figure in "Madame X" and appeared in a cycle of Oscar Wilde's best known works.

Since her arrival in America Miss Linden has been seen in "The Three Bears" with Ann Murdock, in "The Chinese Puzzle" and in several feature films exploited by the World Film Company.



Ada Meade and Donald Brian in "The Girl Behind the Gun"



Alice Brady in "Forever After"

### Vaudeville

PALACE.—Eddie Leonard heads the bill in his minstrel show, "Dandy Dan's Return." The Pelham Naval Band, with Bandmaster Usher, is a special feature, by arrangement with the Liberty Loan Committee. Miss Juliet in her one-girl revue, Dooley and Sales in "Will Yer Jim?" and Kalmar and Brown are other features of the bill.

ALHAMBRA.—Bessie McCoy Davis is the star of the bill. Roy Cummings and Lillian Fermoyle will offer a dramatic sketch called "The Aftermath." Others on the bill are Bertie Beaumont and Jack Arnold, Ethel Hopkins and Chino and Co.

ROYAL.—Bessie Clayton in a dance feature, and Harry Carroll and Anne Wheaton are the chief attractions. On the supporting bill are Jimmy Lucas and Co., the Wilton Sisters, Walter Fenner and Co. and Greenlee and Williams.

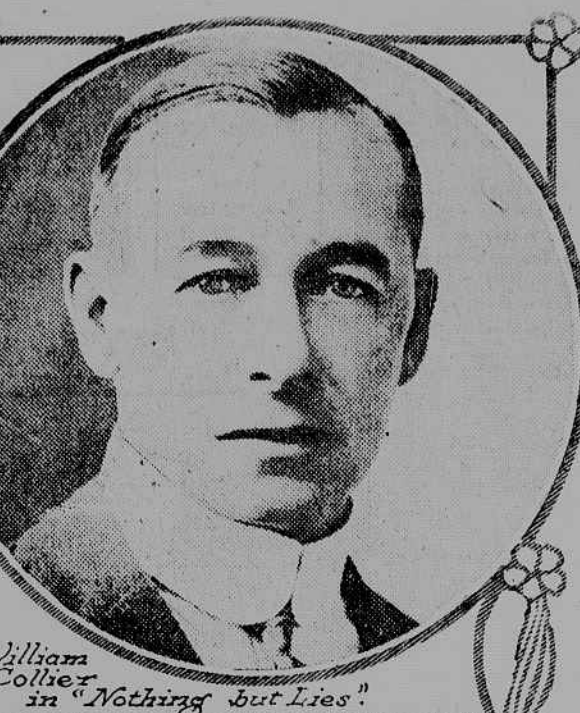
RIVERSIDE.—Mile, Nitta-Jo, French character singer, will make her first American appearance impersonating "Les Gigolettes" (Apache girls) in a setting portraying a Montmartre café. The Avon Comedy Four continue for a second week. Others are Bob Hall, Jack Norworth's "Somewhere with Pershing" and Le Grois.

COLONIAL.—Eddie Foy and the Younger Foy's hold stellar position. The famous Paulist Chorists come here from the Palace; Sargent and Aborn in a vaudeville version of "Alma, Where Do You Live?" Walter Scanlon, Irish tenor; Charley Grapevin and Anna Chance in a skit called "Jed's Vacation" are a few of the other features.

LOEW'S AMERICAN.—Joseph E. Bernard in a farce "Who Is She?" heads the bill the first part of the week, and Guy Woodward and company in a dramatic sketch head the bill the latter. Constance Talmadge in "Sauce for the Goose," and Mary Pickford in "Johnna Enlists" are the picture features for the first and last part of the week.

### Harp Recital by Zoe Cheshire

Zoe Cheshire, the harpist, will give a musical on Thursday evening, October 10, at the residence of Dr. Charles W. Pease, 101 West Seventy-second Street, when she will play for the first time a concerto composed for her by her father shortly before his death. The orchestral accompaniments will be played by Mrs. John Cheshire, pianist. The other assisting artists are Miss Edna Minor, violinist, and Miss Agnes Waters, contralto.



William Collier in "Nothing but Lies"



Clara Joel in "The Big Chance"



Leo Ditrichstein in "The Matinee Hero"



Mrs. Sydney Dren in "Keep Her Smiling"

De Wolf Hopper in "Everything"

## New Plays This Week

MONDAY.—At the Vanderbilt Theatre, Cohan and Harris present Leo Ditrichstein in "The Matinee Hero," a play of the stage in three acts, by Mr. Ditrichstein and A. E. Thomas. In his supporting cast are Catharine Proctor, Lillian Rushmore, Cora Witherspoon, Jessie Parnell, Josephine Hammer, Brandon Tynan, Robert McWade and William Riccardi.

TUESDAY.—At the Longacre Theatre, G. M. Anderson and L. Lawrence Weber present William Collier in "Nothing but Lies," a new farce by Aaron Hoffman. The play is in three acts and a prologue. Mr. Collier is surrounded by a cast which includes Olive Wyndham in the leading feminine rôle, Rapley Holmes, Grant Stewart, William Riley Hatch, Frank Munroe, Robert Strange, Gordon Burby and Malcolm Bradley. "Nothing but Lies" must not be confused with "Nothing But the Truth." The plays are dissimilar in every way except the slight similarity in the titles.

WEDNESDAY.—At the Thirty-ninth Street Theatre, A. H. Woods will present a new American play in four acts, by Grant Morris and Willard Mack, entitled "The Big Chance." The play is said to deal with unusually interesting types and their reactions to a great crisis. The company includes Clara Joel, John Mason, Cyril Keightley, Harry Robert, Annie Mack Berlein, William E. Mehan, Katherine Harris Barrymore, Ramsey Wallace and others.

### Third Week of Opera

#### Comique Season at Park

The third week of the Society of American Singers' season of opera comique at the Park Theatre opens with "Mignon" with John Campbell, Maggie Teyte, Henri Scott, Ruth Miller, John Philip, Carl Formes, Dorothy Frances and John Quine.

Tuesday will be devoted to "Carmen," with Miss Sylvia Riccardi Martini, Henri Scott, Dora de Philippe, Blanche de Costa, Florence Mulford, Franklin Riker, Walter Greene, Howard White, Harvey Wilson and incidental dances by Laura and Edouard Kurlyo.

Wednesday comes the "Daughter of the Regiment," with David Bispham, Craig Campbell, Bianca Saroya and Julia Henry.

Thursday will witness the opening performance of "Hoffmann's Love Tales." This, scheduled to appear on October 4, was postponed. In the cast are Ruth Miller, Bianca Saroya, Maggie Teyte, Kathleen Howard, Julia Henry, Riccardo Martin, Orrin Bastedo, Harvey Wilson, John Quine, Mary Kent, Franklin Riker, John Philip, David Bispham, Carl Formes and Henri Scott.

Friday will bring "Mignon," with Maggie Teyte, John Campbell, Yvonne de Treville, Henri Scott, John Philip, Carl Formes, Dorothy Frances and John Quine. Miss de Treville makes her first "Filline" appearance with the society.

Saturday matinee.—In the repetition of "Hoffmann's Love Tales," with Ruth Miller, Bianca Saroya, Lucy Gates, Kathleen Howard, Julia Henry, John Hand, Orrin Bastedo, Harvey Wilson,

John Quine, Mary Kent, Franklin Riker, John Philip, David Bispham, Carl Formes and Henri Scott. Lucy Gates makes her first appearance of the season.

Saturday evening "Carmen" will be repeated and Sunday there will be a concert conducted by Sam Franko.

### Winthrop Ames to Produce Sequel to "The Blue Bird"

The last week of this month will see the first performance on any stage of "The Betrothal," Maeterlinck's sequel to "The Blue Bird," which Winthrop Ames is to produce and the rehearsals of which already have begun at the Little Theatre under Mr. Ames's personal direction. Many of the characters in "The Blue Bird" are reintroduced in the new play, the hero of which is Tyltyl, a boy of seventeen. All the other male characters are men past forty-five, which makes it appear, that, consciously or unconsciously, the Belgian poet has taken into account the scarcity of young male actors within draft age. The author makes up this shortage, however, by giving us no fewer than seven heroines, and these all young girls of sixteen or under that age. Mrs. O'Kane Conwell, who designed the dresses for "Prunella," will perform a like service for "The Betrothal," for which eighty costumes will be required.

### Bill Hart in Town

William S. Hart, popular Arterial star, has just arrived in town preparatory to his Liberty Loan tour. He is the only theatrical or motion picture star asked by the government to tour in the next bond drive. Before returning to the West Coast studios, Hart will take some scenes on Broadway and thereabouts for his new Arterial film, "Branding Broadway."

### At the One-Week Houses

SHUBERT-RIVIERA.—"The Blue Pearl" with George Nash returns for another New York engagement.

STANDARD.—Charlotte Walker comes in Eugene Walter's comedy drama "Nancy Lee." In the cast are Lorette Clark, Lillian Kemble, Isabel West, Charles Macdonald and William Mortimer.

LOEW'S SEVENTH AVENUE.—Leonel Barrymore will appear in "The Copperhead" by Augustus Thomas.

BRONX OPERA HOUSE.—Stuart Walker's production of "Seventeen" is the attraction here for the week.

BROOKLYN.

MAJESTIC.—"Oh, Boy!" a musical comedy, with book and lyrics by Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse, and music by Jerome Kern, comes here from its New York success.

MONTAUK.—Ruth Chatterton and Henry Miller will be seen in "A Marriage of Convenience."

## A Repertory Venture

By Rebecca Drucker

To one who has wandered the devious byways of this season's productions, listening to strange accents and seeing strange manners, the Comedy Theatre is a spot of sanctuary. Here are people whose grace of manner and beauty of diction are rest and refreshment to the tired wayfarer. They do not obtrude or crowd upon one; they play with intelligence and subtlety. "An Ideal Husband" could be a leaden thing in the wrong hands. In their skilful hands it becomes a thing of spontaneity and light.

"An Ideal Husband" initiates a cautious experiment with a repertory theatre. The success of the Wilde play surprised no one more than the managers who sponsored its production. A revival, and a play cursed with the stigma of being "literary"—it could have but a limited appeal. At best, the profits from productions of this sort are not excessive. In a season of many failures its fate—and the fate of the repertory scheme which it initiated—was precarious. Therefore, its unexpected success (the gentlemen who watch the box offices of Broadway with a hawklike eye place it among the four most successful plays) has given an impetus to the venture in exact proportion as its failure would have hindered it.

At the head of the repertory company are Norman Trevor and Cyril Harcourt. There is a close bond of understanding between these two. Both men have the same sort of background for their ideas, both have a profound respect for the art they serve, and both would be willing to sacrifice personal gain to further the cause of a dignified free theatre.

Trevor was born in India, and came into the theatre at thirty—later than most actors—when his mind had been matured by study and contact with that outside life to which the actor often seems so curiously obtuse. A keen awareness of this outside life has kept him free from the academic traditions of the stage and has liberalized his art. Sensitive and poised, restrained and intelligent, his is an art admirably adapted to the modern theatre.

Cyril Harcourt is a playwright as well as an actor. He has written several plays, two of which have been played here successfully. "A Pair of Silk Stockings," which Winthrop Ames produced at the Little Theatre a few seasons ago, was scintillating high com-

edy, and "A Pair of Petticoats," in which Harcourt himself appeared last season, had the same distinction of manner. Following "An Ideal Husband," a play of his will be produced at the Comedy Theatre. It is called "A Place in the Sun," and is on an English war theme.

While Cyril Harcourt was removing the elaborate make-up of the Earl of Cavesham in the dressing room next door, I quizzed Norman Trevor on his aims. Looking at his keenly intellectual face, I said: "You must want to play Hamlet, I think." "As a matter of fact," retorted Mr. Trevor, "that's the last thing I do want to play. I am too much interested in the modern play. I would not attempt to bridge the sharp cleavage between the classics and the modern stage."

But it was difficult to hold Mr. Trevor to the subject of himself, and he was soon on the general scheme of the repertory theatre. "We shall store up a repertory of modern plays—some of them will be revivals, but none will be classics in the modern sense. To carry it through we shall sometimes need to call in visiting stars. But in the main the organization will be democratic. No one will have an option on 'leading' rôles. For instance, in this play Harcourt is playing the minor part of the Earl of Cavesham."

At this point a call from the stage tore him from my clutches, and Mr. Harcourt having invested himself in a bathrobe, I was admitted. A substantial make-up still concealed the real Cyril Harcourt from view, but that did not prevent conversation.

Harcourt is quick and nervous, and talks with a sharp spontaneity. "Do you include such moderns as Ibsen and Strindberg and Andreyev on the list of moderns for your repertory theatre?" I asked.

He shook his head in negative. "You see," he said, "two English—I should say Anglo-Saxons, because the same is true of you Americans—are not a race of theatre lovers. Oh, I know how many theatres New York supports and how much every one goes to the theatre. That's because in New York it's go to the theatre or walk into the river. But though you, and we in England, too, go to the theatre a great deal, that does not make us intrinsically a race of theatre lovers—not in the same sense that the French or Russians or Scandinavians are. We look to our theatres for entertainment and diversion; it is not a means of racial self-expression, because we are not built for expressing ourselves in the medium of the drama. We are too reserved; self-revelation so public embarrasses us. That is why we are incapable of writing or supporting such drama as the French, Russian or Scandinavian. Our men of genius have his reserve as much as our people. That is why they write books, not plays. And our audience cannot bear to see something really intimate in human nature disclosed on the stage. That is why we have no enterprises like the Art Theatre in Moscow or Reinhardt's theatre. We have no native public to support it. New York is slightly different. You can get an audience for anything in this city. But native ideas prevail, and a permanent institution like a repertory theatre must be a native expression. And we have not the plays, we have not the audiences for drama like Ibsen or Strindberg. We have Shaw, yes—because in the final analysis he makes easy for the audience to shirk the issue. Ours is the drama of diversion. And within these limits a repertory theatre can do much to uphold the standards of taste."

So the repertory theatre starts out with quite honest limitations and no false promises of intellectual insurgency.

Final Week for Griffling Feature "Hearts of the World," D. W. Griffith's stirring production, enters upon its final week at the Forty-fourth Street Theatre, where it will be seen for the last time Saturday evening, October 5. "Hearts of the World" has had an engagement of more than 370 consecutive performances. There will be a matinee every day during the final week.

### War News Effect on Theatres

The news from London reports that theatre-going has been greatly stimulated by the Allied successes. The theatrical business has climbed with the good news of the war, and it is now splendid everywhere.



John Cope and Lorna Volare in "Daddies"